United Nations A/61/PV.59

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

59th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 November 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Baja (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 155

Commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade

Draft resolution (A/61/L.28)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.28.

Mrs. Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.28 on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We are pleased that the African Group of countries has given us unconditional support and encouragement in this initiative. In addition, all members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and many countries of Asia and the Pacific, as well as Western and Eastern Europe, have co-sponsored the draft resolution.

At the outset, I am obliged to point out and make some changes to the text, which is necessary because those changes were made after it was tabled.

First, in the last line of the fifth preambular paragraph, the words "that they" should be deleted. The words "be deemed so" should be deleted and replaced with the words "have been so".

Next, in the second line of the ninth preambular paragraph, after the word "slavery", the words "with regard to" should be deleted and replaced with "and on".

Finally, with regard to operative paragraph 3, since the proposed international day would fall on a Sunday, we propose that the special meeting of the General Assembly be convened on 26 March 2007, instead of 25 March as noted in the text. Therefore, the date of 25 March in the first line should be deleted and replaced with 26 March 2007. In the second line, the words "on the international day for the" should be deleted and replaced with the word "in".

25 March 2007 will be a significant day for the international community. It will mark the passage of 200 years since the imperial British Parliament passed the act for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in all of its empire. The Act was to help chart the course for abolition all over the world. We acknowledge and remember with gratitude those who led the struggle for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade.

Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade represent one of the low points in the history of humanity. They resulted in the forced removal of over 18 million people, over a period of some 500 years, from Africa to the new world of the Americas, including the Caribbean, the United States, Brazil and

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the Spanish Empire. There they were put to work as slaves, mostly on sugar plantations, enriching the imperial empires of the time. Apart from the misery and suffering of the captured men, women and children, the nefarious trade turned brother against brother, destroyed families and whole communities, and caused untold damage to the countries of West Africa.

It is painful to recall the way in which the captives were forced into detention and transported as human cargo, packed into the foul holds of ships like mere chattels and taken across the Atlantic to this so-called new world. On arrival, they were further dehumanized. That they were emasculated, sold, robbed of their culture, their skins branded by hot irons and imprinted with the label of their owners, still jolts the conscience, recalling and reinforcing the depths of man's inhumanity to man.

It took the international community almost 200 years to acknowledge slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity. We have been asked why we bother to rehash an event that happened so long ago. But for us, the people of the Caribbean and of Africa, 200 years is not so very long ago. As descendants of those who lived and died during those 500 years, it is our solemn obligation to ensure that their memories are honoured and that their suffering is never forgotten.

Not only did this massive relocation of African humanity across the Atlantic cause permanent and enormous damage to our ancestors and their descendants on every continent bordering the Atlantic, it led to the depopulation of Africa and the stifling of African creativity and production and was the genesis of a dependent relationship with Europe. We still see the unfortunate lingering effects today.

The subject of the draft resolution we introduce and present for adoption today is relevant in many respects. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. Yet contemporary forms of slavery persist today, reinforcing the need to ensure that such situations will not become a part of the history of the future.

The draft resolution expresses deep concern that it took the international community nearly 200 years to acknowledge slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity and expresses the view that they should always have been acknowledged as such. The draft resolution is relevant in that it acknowledges that the slave trade and slavery are at the heart of situations of profound social and economic inequality, hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice, which continue to affect people of African descent today. Against this background, we emphasize the importance of the provision of effective remedies, recourse, redress and other measures at the national, regional and international levels aimed at countering the continued impact of slavery and the slave trade. That is nothing less than what has been agreed by the international community through the Durban Declaration of 2001.

The knowledge that we have today on the consequences of the slave trade and slavery is vague and imprecise. The reason for that is that the history of those events has been reported by the slavers and not by the slaves. The numbers transported across the Atlantic on those fateful journeys are in doubt. There may well have been considerably more. Our knowledge is restricted also due to lack of exploration on the interactions past and present of the peoples of Europe, Africa, the Americas, including the Caribbean, and Asia. We therefore welcome the work being undertaken by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through the Slave Route Project's restructured International Scientific Committee and look forward to the outcome of its work in due course.

The lessons of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery are still relevant, even as we recognize contemporary forms of slavery that exist today. We urge Member States that have not already done so to develop educational programmes, including through school curricula, to educate and inculcate so that future generations will be truthfully informed about the tragedy, lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade.

Through this draft resolution the Assembly will agree to designate 25 March 2007 as the "International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade". The Durban Declaration provides a succinct statement as to how to help close those dark chapters in history and to bring conciliation and healing. This draft resolution thus seeks to the honour the memory of those who died as a result of slavery, including through exposure to the horrors of the Middle Passage and in revolt and resistance to their enslavement.

Furthermore, their commemoration in 2007 will provide an opportunity to contribute to restoring the dignity of the victims by finding appropriate ways to express remorse, to apologize and to make amends. That will truly be an opportunity to do the right thing and bring some measure of closure to a dark past some would rather forget.

But we of the Caribbean need to remember in order to know from whence we came. We need to make sure that our children know of the dark deeds perpetrated in the name of commerce and profit. Carrying this knowledge with us and passing it on will be the surest way of protecting future generations from the scourge and terror that marked the foundation of our very existence. We owe this much to our forefathers who suffered enslavement, torture and very often death at the hands of their tormentors. We must never forget.

The adoption of this draft resolution will be a historic moment for CARICOM, and we are extremely grateful to all of the delegations that have sponsored the text. In addition to the original 137 sponsors listed in document A/61/L.28, the following countries have joined the list of co-sponsors: Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Honduras, Israel, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mauritania, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia and Turkey.

We deeply appreciate the support we have received. That is very important for us. We are asking all Member States to join us in adopting the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Mbuende (Namibia): It gives me great pleasure to speak on agenda item 155, on the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, on behalf of the African Group. I wish to convey our sincere appreciation to our colleagues in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Group of countries for their initiative in submitting draft resolution A/61/L.28, which of course we fully support.

One of the horrific, painful and brutal chapters in the history of Africa, and indeed of mankind as a whole, is the slave trade and slavery. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade, which took place between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, robbed Africa of millions of its most able-bodied citizens who were forced to leave their motherland and were transported to strange lands in the Americas and the Caribbean. Many perished during the long journey across the Atlantic. Of those who arrived at their final destination, some died due to severe weather conditions, not to speak of the inhumane treatment they suffered at the hands of their masters and the brutal system. Slavery and the slave trade have appropriately been declared a crime against humanity.

The proposed commemoration would be an occasion where we not only remind ourselves of the past but also rededicate ourselves to a more humane future. We have to keep on reminding ourselves of the past in order to ensure that it will never be repeated again in any form.

The year 1807 witnessed the abolition of the abhorrent system of the slave trade. That came about as a result of a combination of factors — political, economic, social and humanitarian. The abolishment of slavery also marked the triumph of the human spirit and the will to freedom. We are therefore also celebrating the resilience of a people to survive slavery and to lead successful lives in the diaspora against all odds. I would like to pay special tribute to the African people and people of African origin in the Caribbean and the Americas.

There is no doubt that the impact of slavery and the slave trade is still being felt in many ways up to the present day. It is therefore important to decide to set a day on which we commemorate the heroic struggle against slavery and to honour the lives of those who perished under slavery and the slave trade. The African Group would like to underline the need for the international community to take any measures necessary aimed at addressing the impact of slavery and the slave trade.

Finally, we reiterate our support for draft resolution A/61/L.28 before this Assembly, as presented by the Caribbean Community under this agenda item.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): On agenda item 155, "Commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade", I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 20 Member States that comprise the Rio Group.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Article 4 of the Declaration expressly proscribes the enslavement or subjection to servitude of any individual. The Rio Group unreservedly condemns slavery and servitude in all their forms and manifestations and urges the international community to increase its vigilance and to take all measures necessary to eliminate such practices. In that context, the upcoming International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, to be celebrated on 2 December, provides a signal opportunity to renew our common struggle to remove that scourge from all societies.

The forced transportation of millions of Africans to the Americas as slaves continues to have a grave impact on the lives of the descendants of slaves in our part of the world. The legacy of the nefarious trade is manifested in many ways, including through economic and social inequalities, social exclusion and discrimination based on race. No less detrimental has been its impact on Africa, whose development has suffered immeasurably as a consequence. The Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in 2001, therefore fittingly deems the slave trade and slavery as crimes against humanity. Our Group supports calls for redress for the wrongs committed, in accordance with the Durban Programme of Action, which we view as vital in addressing this important issue.

The Rio Group is fully supportive of the initiative of the countries of the Caribbean Community to commemorate on 25 March 25, 2007, the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. That date represents a significant milestone in the ultimate abolition of slavery, not only in the British Empire, but, together with like initiatives both before and after, throughout the world. This occasion also provides pause to honour the memory of slaves who, though subject to the most barbaric and inhuman of conditions, never lost the will to be free and to live in dignity. Emerging from the horrors of the middle passage and the plantation, peoples of African descent now enrich societies and nations far beyond the continent. The historical record and contemporary realities are replete with examples of their contribution to progress in all domains of human endeavour.

In the year ahead, several States within our region and beyond will implement programmes reflecting on the rich heritage and culture of Africans and people of African descent in our various societies. It is the hope of the Rio Group that the occasion will serve to enhance knowledge and understanding of the impact of slavery and the slave trade, and to identify means of addressing the legacy of the trade and to help in charting a more hopeful future for all peoples everywhere.

The States members of the Rio Group have all co-sponsored draft resolution A/61/L.28. We unequivocally endorse its adoption by consensus by the Assembly and invite all Members to lend their valuable support to this cause.

Mr. Jokinen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

At the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the European Union was pleased to join international consensus in acknowledging that

> "slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, and further acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade, and are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences" (*A/CONF.189/12, Chap. I, para. 13*).

In supporting today's draft resolution, the European Union strongly reiterates that position. The European Union, like others, wants to consider the complex historical, social and legal issues related to slavery and the slave trade fully and in a transparent

manner. We remain convinced, however, that those issues are best addressed within the framework of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. As the European Union stated at the time, nothing in the Durban Declaration or Programme of Action can affect the general legal principle which precludes the retrospective application of international law in matters of State responsibility. Likewise, those documents cannot impose obligations, liability or a right to compensation on anyone. The same is true of this draft resolution.

The two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, on 25 March 2007, will hold enormous importance and significance for those countries whose people suffered from that trade and will be an opportunity for the European Union to remember the millions of persons who suffered from that tragedy. We welcome the opportunity, provided by this draft resolution, to commemorate this turning point in history at the United Nations. For those reasons, the European Union looks forward to joining the consensus in support of adopting this draft resolution.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): The Jamaican delegation is proud to be part of the joint initiative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that led to the inscription of agenda item 155, entitled "Commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade", and the submission of draft resolution A/61/L.28.

Jamaica fully aligns itself with the statement made by Margaret Ferrari, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of CARICOM, who, on behalf of the more than 140 sponsors of the draft resolution, introduced the text to the General Assembly. Jamaica also naturally anticipates that, given the fundamental importance to the international community of the issues addressed in draft resolution A/61/L.28, the Assembly will readily agree to the adoption of the text by consensus.

As the draft resolution so fittingly recalls and recognizes, both the slave trade and slavery are among the worst violations of human rights in the history of humanity, bearing in mind in particular their scale and duration. The Durban Declaration, which was an outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September 2001, referred to them as appalling tragedies in the history of humanity, especially in their negation of the essence of the victims. The Declaration not only declared slavery and the slave trade to be a crime against humanity; it also declared that they should always have been considered as such.

It is therefore of fundamental importance that, as we engage in this solemn debate and proceed to consider and take action on draft resolution A/61/L.28, we dare not forget that the horrific Middle Passage, which characterized the very essence of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, was responsible for the deaths of millions of Africans as a direct result of torture, malnutrition, disease and resistance. Historians also estimate that by the end of the entire process, two Africans had died during the Middle Passage for every one who had successfully arrived at the plantations in the Americas.

Against that sombre backdrop, the draft resolution seeks to honour the memory of those who died as a result of slavery, including through exposure to the Middle Passage and in revolt and resistance against enslavement. Accordingly, the General Assembly is being invited to note that 2007 will mark the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and to take a decision designating 25 March 2007 as the International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

CARICOM countries, along with our African partners, the United Kingdom and other countries, will be actively involved in other activities to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in 2007.

I should like to mention the fact that, at the domestic level, Jamaica intends to engage in a year-long series of activities, including the erection of national monuments along the coastal areas where the slaves arrived on our shores. In so doing, we will recognize not only the victims who died as a result of slavery and the slave trade, but also those unsung heroes – those anti-slavery activists — who contributed significantly to the struggle.

With the adoption of this draft resolution, along with the commemorative activities to be held in 2007, let us, in solemn honour of all the victims, now begin the initial steps towards acknowledgement, atonement, healing and reconciliation, while underlining the firm

resolve of the international community that such horrific acts, which so dehumanized the victims in terms of their dignity, spirit and self-worth, should never be forgotten or be allowed to recur.

Beyond those symbolic gestures, it should be emphasized that the legacy of the slave trade and slavery are of fundamental importance not just to the Caribbean and Africa; their consequences should rightly stir the conscience of the international community, especially considering their continued impact in political, social and economic terms. We therefore stress the need for remedies, redress, recourse and compensatory and other measures at the relevant levels, aimed at addressing the lingering impact of slavery and the slave trade.

In conclusion, Jamaica therefore urges that, in honouring the memory of the victims of the twin evils of slavery and the slave trade, the international community agree to erect a permanent memorial in a place of prominence in the hallowed halls of the United Nations — a memorial that should stand as a stark reminder of man's inhumanity to man.

Mrs. Booker (Bahamas): The Bahamas, as a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), is pleased to join the more than 150 sponsors of this draft resolution and fully endorses the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Bahamas also wishes to thank the delegation of Jamaica and the other members of CARICOM for the outstanding work carried out in spearheading the negotiations on this historic draft resolution on behalf of the Community.

Today is indeed historic for all of us, as we are about to set the stage for and embark on perhaps the most significant event in the history of our lands. Today's consideration and adoption of this very important draft resolution by the General Assembly are meaningful, as they represent an attempt to erect a bridge spanning two hundred years and the seas and the lands of Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean.

Since the creation of the Organization in 1945, we have too often heard calls echoed throughout these halls urging Member States to comply with their obligations under various human rights instruments and conventions. Today, we, as a Community, reiterate the call for the entire international community to reaffirm, recall, acknowledge and pay recognition to the human rights abuses and violations suffered by millions of our ancestors in the motherland of Africa, in "'tween decks" of ships during the 3,700-mile Trans-Atlantic journey, on the docks of ports, in the streets, in the plantation fields and in the homes of plantation owners throughout the Americas.

The call made here today is long overdue. However, we cannot and should not lament the past, but rather look to the future that the adoption of this draft resolution will hold for all of us. Nor can we continue to pay lip service to the ongoing scourges of human rights abuses and violations that still present a challenge for the Organization some 61 years later.

As we commemorate this momentous and historic occasion, let us not forget that the practice of slavery, in some form of another, still exists today. We must not rest until all people are free from enslavement, are no longer the victim of torture and trafficking, and are able to enjoy their full rights, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a fundamental principle of the Organization.

The Bahamas commends the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, for having declared slavery and the slave trade a crime against humanity. However, it is disheartening to note that, yet again, the recent draft resolution on global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action recently adopted by the Third Committee of the General Assembly, did not achieve consensus. What are we saying to the millions of victims of human rights abuses and violations who look to this organization for hope? How is it that we are so concerned about language, terminology and the interpretation thereof that the important issues are overlooked? It is the hope of the delegation of the Bahamas that we can build consensus on the issue of human rights and learn from the victims whose lives we work here to improve.

The Bahamas is proud of the hard work and sacrifice made by its African ancestors in contributing to the growth and development of a country that has a longstanding history of participatory democracy. It is a nation that still maintains many of the customs inherited from ex-slaves and liberated Africans,

predominantly from the Yoruba tribe, following the Emancipation Proclamation of 1807. Customs such as the asue, friendly societies and affiliated lodges, the jumping dance, ring play and our most popular cultural event, the Junkanoo — named for a former slave, John Canoe — still flourish in the Bahamas and are very much a part of the Bahamian cultural and social psyche.

As we celebrate the adoption of this draft resolution today — hopefully by consensus — we remember those who have worked tirelessly for the preservation of our cultural heritage. The Bahamas has the sad honour to announce the sudden passing in Jamaica this past Saturday of the Chairman of the Bahamas National Cultural Development Commission, Mr. Winston Saunders. Mr. Saunders was a cultural icon whose work in the area of culture extended far beyond the shores of his beloved land of the Bahamas. As Chairman of the Bahamas National Cultural Commission, he was spearheading plans for the commemoration in 2007. On behalf of the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas, Ms. Paulette Bethel, and the delegation of the Bahamas, I extend sincere condolences to his wife, Ms. Gail Saunders, and to his entire family.

In conclusion, as stated by the Foreign Minister of the Bahamas in his address to the General Assembly during the general debate in September, the Bahamas plans to undertake a number of commemorative events, including a festival of the arts, which will feature various countries and regions in Africa, through theatre, art, music and dance. These series of events aim to foster knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and its significance to the social, economic, cultural and political life of our society. We are pleased to be a part of this historic commemoration and to re-establish our common link and heritage with other countries affected by this devastating tragedy and crime against humanity.

Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): It is with pride that my delegation associates itself with the statement made by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), submitted draft resolution A/61/L.28, which designates 25 March 2007 the two-hundredth anniversary of the law enacted by the imperial Parliament of Great Britain on the abolition of the slave trade throughout its empire. It also aligns itself with the statements made by those delegations and regional groups that have given their unequivocal support to this draft resolution.

Although the international community waited almost 200 years before recognizing slavery and the slave trade as a crime against humanity, that delay did not discourage those who bear, and will long continue to bear, the deep and tangible scars of slavery.

The dignified descendants and heirs of that huddled mass of people, torn away against their will from Africa, their motherland, had to wait two centuries to see 23 August 2004 recognized as the day of the San Domingo slave uprising. But today we in CARICOM and our many partners are ready to adopt this draft resolution, and that is because the voice of reason has prevailed; all understood and realized that there was no other choice but to join with us to put an end to the awful chapter of the slave trade and start over with a new kind of contract, whose new resolutions, declarations and conventions on the issue will serve as a compass in future.

In adopting this draft resolution, we seek to commemorate the abolition of a horrendous phenomenon that, from the time of the very first attempts to establish it, should have appeared unconscionable to those who, in an outrageous misuse of power, abused, without a qualm and with total impunity, an entire race and an entire continent. Indeed, the duty of remembrance forces us all, victims and perpetrators both, to recall in particular the deaths of those millions of men and women who, torn away from the land of their birth, Africa, died as a result of slavery, especially while crossing the Atlantic, either as the result of abuse or as a consequence of their resistance to the new and appalling status that was being imposed on them, with total disregard for their dignity.

On 23 August 1791, Haiti, which was then known as San Domingo, witnessed a general uprising on the part of its slaves. Following centuries of terrible suffering, their descendants exercised the right to force those who had instigated and profited from the flourishing but degrading slave trade to face reality. That is because, at long last, the echoing cries of the millions of wasted and reviled lives were finally heard and their demand for justice heeded.

Slavery and the black slave trade are considered by the international community as the most serious human rights violations in the history of humanity. For

centuries, the slave trade fed the oceans, fertilized fields and contributed to the opulence of cities. While forcefully condemning those practices from the past, we must step up our vigilance to ensure that might never again defeats right and that human beings are never again subjected to the whims of the powerful or of their henchmen. We must finally recognize that force has its limits and that all human beings are born equal and remain so before the law.

I would be remiss if I did not mention here the name of Toussaint Louverture, the precursor of Haitian independence, who died in April 1803 at Fort de Joux, France, from grief and deprivation. Eight months after the death of that great visionary, Haiti proclaimed its independence, on 1 January 1804. Through that eloquent act, slaves and their descendants not only ensured the triumph of the values of liberty, equality and justice throughout the territory, but also opened the way for, and assisted in, the emancipation and liberation of several countries of the region and other parts of the world.

In a few months' time, on 25 March 2007, we will commemorate and deeply reflect on the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. We must pay therefore homage to all those who made the supreme sacrifice, and we must recognize all those who went against the interests of party and clan to guarantee the freedom that we enjoy today.

It is on that basis, and with honour and pride, that Haiti will welcome the adoption — by consensus, we hope — of draft resolution A/61/L.28.

Mr. Sen (India): It is my privilege to speak in the debate on the agenda item on the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. I am grateful to the Member States of the Caribbean, who have worked to have this item inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session.

I will make a few comments on what we consider to be the important elements of this resolution and on the significance of the resolution itself. I have been asked to do this by some of my friends in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and I am privileged to have their friendship. I will mainly concentrate on the Caribbean, for the sake of both brevity and clarity.

The resolution speaks of filling and overcoming the knowledge gap. This is important. The Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines made a reference to the slave narratives. We think it important that the UNESCO Committee on the Slave Route project really examine these slave narratives, because the narratives of the descendants of those who actually carried out the slave trade, and even the narratives of many from the developing countries, are really the narratives of the history of the State and of Governments. They do not, therefore, represent history, but a usurpation of history. Therefore, it is only a subaltern history that can reclaim history and thereby fill the knowledge gap.

The resolution speaks of the horrors of the Middle Passage and of the revolt and resistance to slavery. Indeed, between 35 to 50 per cent of the African captives died on these slave ships. Over many centuries, there was a continuous trail of revolt on the slave ships themselves, spreading from there to the Caribbean and to North and South America. One of the most important such revolts took place in Jamaica in the middle of the seventeenth century. These revolts spread throughout the entire region. Even the landscape in the Caribbean is a mute witness to this tragic history: the sugar cane that was brought by Columbus. We remember how discoveries actually turned into conquest and robbery. We remember the bread fruit trees that were brought by the infamous Captain Bligh of the mutiny on the Bounty and the star apple trees in Jamaica brought for the provisioning of slaves.

We also have narratives from the other side that are fairly honest. Stedman, for instance, was sent to suppress the revolt in Suriname in 1774 and, therefore, his narrative cannot be thought to be propaganda. He paints a truly grim picture of a whole country that was based on widespread torture and was really a vast concentration camp. No wonder revolts were as frequent and had as great an intensity as hurricanes.

Many of these revolts succeeded and, in fact, were able to set up pockets of self-governing communities based on many African customs. The Permanent Representative of the Bahamas referred to some of the cultural customs that were carried over and that still exist. In fact, if one looks at the American War of Independence of 1776, it did not really transform society immediately. The revolt that the Permanent Representative of Haiti referred to, the revolt in San

Domingo, actually destroyed the colonial slave structure and had a very far-reaching impact of a societal nature.

It is indeed necessary to fill the knowledge gap, because so many people know about the revolt of Spartacus in Rome, but how many know of the revolt in San Domingo led by Toussaint L'Ouverture? How many also realize that this paved the way for the establishment of the first black republic in the Caribbean? The military loss by France in 1803 predates, by 150 years, the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in Viet Nam in 1954. When the resolution speaks of the restoration of dignity, that is based on the recovery of memory. It is only by remembering such facts and propagating them that one can really reclaim one's history.

Over many centuries — from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century — the colonial Powers simultaneously fought three kinds of wars: the wars of plunder and piracy; the wars of the extermination of the local people and the expropriation of their land; and the wars in Africa to have African captives to use as slave labour. I feel that I should point this out in the context of some recent events. In many of these revolts, the indigenous people fought shoulder to shoulder with the African blacks. For that reason, the Maya Indians were deported to Cuba in the second half of the nineteenth century. We personally feel that such a choice between the two should not have been made. It is only through the solidarity of the indigenous people and the African people that we can make any genuine advances and be true to the history that really exists and read in the slave narratives.

I also wanted to say that the wealth generated by this contributed to the strength of the European economy, to science and technology and even to the development of culture — all of which are contaminated by their origins.

Looking at the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, I remember a recently released film based on Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice". Hers are extraordinary novels of great artistic power, but the idyllic picture that these novels paint hides one fundamental thing. It comes through in only one remark by one character, who says that the owner of a certain estate has a huge plantation in the West Indies. So, all of this is built on that.

This is not to say that all intellectuals were like that. There were intellectuals, such as Dr. Johnson, for instance, by no means a radical — in fact a Tory — who condemned, in no uncertain terms, the waging of war against countries simply because they could not resist. They condemned the invading of lands because they were fruitful; the spreading of navigation, only to propagate vice; the visiting of distant lands, only to lay them waste.

Looking back on all of that, a great radical thinker of the last decades of the nineteenth century saw the interconnection between all these events, including the case of India, for example, from which indentured labour was taken to the West Indies. He saw the interconnection of all these factors, and saw this truly as the foundation of the colonial system.

If my memory does not deceive me, he wrote that the discovery of gold and silver in the Americas, the extirpation and entombment in mines of the entire indigenous population, the beginning of the plunder of India, the turning of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins; all of this signified the rosy dawn of the era of industrial production. He said these were the idyllic proceedings that marked the moments of primitive accumulation. Therefore, in his very bitter phrase, he said that capital therefore came dripping from head to foot from every pore, with blood and dirt. The only way that this origin of capital can be redressed is through working for a truly equitable world order which would be underpinned by equitable political and economic rules. This means fundamental, true reform of the international economic and political machinery, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations.

It is because of this that I would also recall the great words of our first Prime Minister, one of the leaders of the freedom struggle, Jawarlal Nehru, who understood these interconnections and these imperatives. In addressing the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, Nehru said that "there is nothing more terrible, there is nothing more horrible than the infinite tragedy of Africa in the past few hundred years". He said that when he thought of that tragedy, everything else paled into insignificance, including what we had experienced in Asia. The draft resolution also refers to the profound social and economic inequality and to the need to find effective remedies.

The Caribbean is rich in natural resources, with its vast reserves of iron, bauxite, copper, coal and chromium, as well as 10 per cent of the world's hydrocarbon resources. The Caribbean basin is virtually a sea of oil and gas, according to many estimates. And yet it is the big corporations of the advanced countries that really have the overwhelming majority equity ownership and which get the lion's share of the profits derived from these resources. The situation is made worse by the decline of the sugar industry, the relative failure of the great Nobel Prize-winning W. Arthur Lewis's model of building industrialization on the basis of bauxite and oil, the tremendous emigration of the best and brightest and high unemployment. Ultimately, many of these gross domestic product (GDP) statistics simply mask structures of dependence.

Therefore, the question of the effective remedies remains. Effective remedies can only be those that effectively address the structures of dependence and overcome them, through a fundamental change in the international economic institutions and the rules that underpin them.

The mind in the Caribbean has never been enslaved. The mind is free. That has been shown by the great writers of the Caribbean such as Derek Walcott, George Lamming and Aimé Césaire. W. Arthur Lewis also spoke of what he called protest leaders and creative leaders. Given the enormous middle class in the Caribbean and given the enormous human talent there, I am sure there will be both these kinds of leaders to lead the process of transformation in the Caribbean.

It is indeed for us a matter of great pride to be among the first to support and sponsor this draft resolution; we support the declaration of 25 March 2007 as the International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

But the way forward to achieve effective remedies, we feel, is along the lines that I have outlined, so that the societies in the Caribbean can be helped to be integrated and to be at peace with themselves, so that they can take control of their own destiny, so that they can have a fair share of their natural resources and so that they can stop the haemorrhaging of their best and brightest and thereby complete the revolution that was begun in Santo Domingo in 1791.

Ms. Núñez Mordoche (*spoke in Spanish*): Our national hero José Martí wrote:

> "I know of a deep sorrow
> Among the nameless woes:
> The enslavement of men
> Is the great shame of the world."

Those simple verses of the apostle of our Cuban homeland are a synthesis of the inhumanity of one of the most sordid chapters of modern history: Trans-Atlantic trade in African slaves.

The development of this process, driven by the insatiable greed of European slave traders who needed slave labour to build up their great colonial empires in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has left deep tangible traces in Cuba that bear witness to that time, in the form of old sugar mills, coffee plantations, slave quarters and other constructions remaining in our countryside, some of them already blending in with their natural surroundings.

As part of the cruel slave trade, about 1.3 million Africans arrived on our island, most from the sub-Saharan part of the continent. The arrival of Lukumí, Carabalies, Congos, Gangas, Minas, Bibies, Yorubas and other ethnic groups had an immediate impact on the colonial society of the time and, after a complex transcultural process, gave birth to the Cuban nationality, which is essentially a mix of the Hispanic and the African.

However, a major group of slaves brought by force did not resign themselves to being exploited. Those who decided to run away from the whips of the foremen and the humiliations of the plantations framed the principle of the spirit of rebelliousness and emancipation of the Cuban people. In today's Cuba, the cimarrón — the runaway slave — and the palenque — their hideout — are symbols of an entire people's struggle for independence and sovereignty.

Histories similar to that of Cuba, relating to the slave trade, occurred in almost all the areas of the American continent and the Caribbean. The slave route was an intrinsic part of the bloody exploitation and impoverishment of the African continent and the cruel discrimination suffered by the descendants of slaves in the western Hemisphere for many years.

Nowadays, many attempt to ignore, justify or, worse yet, erase this sad chapter of our history. Hence the crucial importance of draft resolution A/61/L.28.

Cuba would like to take this opportunity to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). In recent years, there has been an escalation of opposition in former colonial metropolises to any formula aimed at causing them to honour their historical debt towards those who endured slavery for centuries.

Those who amassed their huge fortunes at the expense of the sweat and blood of slaves and who plunged our nations into the dreadful consequences of mono-production and single-crop economies, cannot simply wash their hands now of their dark past through a self-induced historical amnesia in the framework of neoliberal globalization, where the rich, the same ones as before, are ever richer and where our nations are doomed to exclusion and impoverishment.

Despite the tight blockade and the campaigns of slander, Cuba will carry on its programmes of cooperation with African, Caribbean and other third world nations, as part of the joint effort to reverse the consequences of the slave trade and other tragic moments of colonialism and neocolonialism. We Cubans will continue to study and preserve the legacy of those who, despite toiling in the Antillean plantations, left us their language, their religious beliefs, their music and temperament, and their spirit of struggle for independence and sovereignty, and who changed us forever.

Mr. Miller (United States of America): While the world closed its eyes for more than three centuries, millions of Africans were brutally torn from their homeland and families and sold into human bondage. Though the United States had been a nation for just 30 years when the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished, the trade's legacy of hatred and pain has been felt throughout the past two centuries and throughout the hemisphere.

In 1807, the United States outlawed the importation of slaves. However, the fight over slavery itself would not end in the United States until our own Civil War — the bloodiest war in American history and a conflict that claimed more than 600,000 American lives.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, countless individuals in the United States and elsewhere committed their lives to ending the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery. Their efforts deserve recognition today.

The United States, as a society, has gone to great lengths to ensure equitable treatment for all citizens, regardless of race or country of origin. When there is injustice, appropriate remedies lie within our legal system and the implementation of civil rights legislation already in place. As a multicultural society, the United States maintains a strong commitment to fighting racism, safeguarding the dignity of people regardless of race or background, and countering the hateful legacy of slavery. The adoption today of this draft resolution, which the United States will support, is in keeping with that commitment and those efforts.

With regard to today's draft resolution, however, it is deeply regrettable that the sponsors chose to include references to the Durban Declaration in the text. Our views on the Durban Declaration are well known and the adoption of the draft resolution will not change those views. We do not support, inter alia, its language regarding reparations and compensation for individuals living now, and thus we do not support an emphasis on that point in the draft resolution, even in a preambular paragraph. The references needlessly politicize what is otherwise a genuine moment of solidarity. A more open and understanding approach by the sponsors to the views of other delegations would have been more in keeping with the spirit of reconciliation that otherwise inspires our action here today.

As we recognize the anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, it is important to note that the struggle against slavery goes on. Today, 200 years after the event we commemorate with this draft resolution, thousands of people every year are still being taken from their homes and their families, transported hundreds and even thousands of miles, and sold into human bondage. An estimated 12.3 million people, many of whom are children, are enslaved in forced or bonded labour, sexual servitude and involuntary servitude. Human trafficking is nothing less than the modern-day continuation of the slave trade, and its victims cannot be ignored.

If we fail to protect those powerless to protect themselves, we are as culpable as those who turned a

blind eye towards slavery for more than 300 years. We cannot celebrate the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade 200 years ago while ignoring what is going on today. This is a call to action. As with the abolition of slavery and the slave trade itself, there is a moral imperative that human trafficking be stopped. And it will be stopped only through the collective will of civilized nations and people.

The abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was an important moral step in dismantling the institution of slavery, and we are right to recognize and celebrate its two-hundredth anniversary. We must work together to ensure that never again will a human being be a commodity; that never again will a man, woman or child be bought and sold; and that never again will generations be abused while the world stands by and does nothing.

Mr. Barnes (Liberia): The Liberian delegation welcomes the opportunity to join in the deliberation on agenda item 155, "Commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade".

For many in this great Hall, it is mind-boggling that the world community has taken this long in grappling with the idea to commemorate what is perhaps one of the saddest chapters in human history. That calamity, which epitomizes the worst of man's inhumanity to man, raped the African continent of valuable human resources and laid the bedrock of Africa's continued underdevelopment and dependency.

As a nation that traces its birth to the aftermath of the indignity and incalculable cruelty that characterized the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Liberia remains a vivid reminder of the indomitable spirit of Africans and those of African descent. While the commemoration of the abolition of slavery is a necessary step in the right direction, it is not by any means an end in itself. In that context, the international community must continue to adopt concrete measures to ensure that all the characteristics of slavery, some of which still exist, are totally abolished.

The adoption of draft resolution A/61/L.28 is the least the Assembly can do in memory of the dead, as well as in support of those who continue to be affected by the consequences of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. I thank the sponsors of the draft resolution for their courage and foresight, and further urge that the text be adopted without a vote.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade now stands as one of the most inhuman enterprises in history. At a time when capitals in Europe and America championed the Enlightenment, our merchants were enslaving a continent. The "rights of man" did not extend to Africa. Racism drove the triangular trade and its horrors. Some 12 million were transported and some 3 million killed.

The date 25 March 2007 will mark 200 years to the day since a parliamentary bill, the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, was passed by the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade in the then British Empire. That Act was the beginning of the long road to the eventual abolition of slavery within the Empire 25 years later. The Act made it illegal for British ships to be involved in the slave trade and marked the beginning of the end for the Trans-Atlantic traffic in human beings. A year later, the West African Squadron of the Royal Navy was established off the coast of Africa to suppress slave trading across the Atlantic Ocean. Over the next 60 years, its anti-slavery operations along the West Coast of Africa and into East Africa and the Caribbean enforced the ban.

The 1807 Act was the culmination of 20 years of dedication to the cause of abolitionism by William Wilberforce, a British parliamentarian, writer and social reformer. The passing of his parliamentary Act marked a critical step for the United Kingdom, permitting it to enter into the modern world and a new and more just moral universe.

Accordingly, the British Government will commemorate this crucial turning point in history through a range of activities both at home and overseas throughout 2007. Therefore, we warmly welcome the adoption today of this draft resolution, which we are proud to co-sponsor. We look forward to the planned United Nations commemorative day to mark the two-hundredth anniversary. We will work with members of the Caribbean Community and others in preparing a series of events at the United Nations that suitably reflect the vital historical importance of this day.

The two-hundredth anniversary in March 2007 holds enormous importance and significance for those countries whose people suffered from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. We want to learn together the

lessons that it teaches us about our past, but also about our present and our future. The bicentenary is an opportunity for us all to remember the millions who suffered, to pay tribute to the courage and moral conviction of all those who campaigned for abolition and to confront the tragic fact that throughout this world today, contemporary forms of slavery still persist, two centuries after the argument for abolition was won.

This year, in fact, marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. We would urge those States that have not yet done so to accede to that instrument.

As Wilberforce concluded when he first described to the British Parliament the horror of slavery more than 200 hundred years ago, "You may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know". That is our obligation today to those who still suffer servitude and human trafficking.

Mr. Chibaeff (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. In my national capacity, I wish to draw the attention of delegations to a number of additional points.

France naturally shares the willingness expressed here to commemorate the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. A memorial dedicated to the abolition of slavery, intended to call French citizens and foreign visitors to reflection and meditation, will soon be erected in the French city of Nantes, which was an important centre of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

To fulfil the duty of remembrance, our country continues to take numerous actions to acknowledge the vile crime that was slavery and to raise French awareness about that grave subject. The French law enacted on 10 May 2001 explicitly recognizes the slave trade and slavery as crimes against humanity. In that spirit, the abolition of slavery will now be officially and solemnly commemorated in France on a specific day, 10 May, each year. Finally, a Slavery Remembrance Committee has been established for the specific purpose of proposing to the ministry responsible for national education curriculum adjustment measures and awareness-raising activities in the schools.

It is in that spirit that France intends to align itself with the will expressed in draft resolution A/61/L.28 to commemorate at the national level the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Over the course of several centuries, approximately 10 million people of African descent were transported from the African continent to the Americas under appalling conditions. The Netherlands, among other nations, played a sad role during that episode of world history.

The Netherlands co-sponsored this draft resolution and sincerely appreciates and respects the celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in 2007, believing that it is tremendously important to remember the darker side of history in particular.

As stated in the intervention by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, the draft resolution also raises a number of complex legal issues, which are best addressed within the framework of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Nothing in the Declaration or Programme of Action can affect the general legal principle that precludes the retroactive application of international law in matters of State responsibility. Likewise, those documents cannot impose obligations, liability or a right to compensation on anyone. The same is true of this draft resolution.

Since 1 July 2002, the Netherlands has celebrated the abolition of slavery with an annual national commemoration. A monument in Amsterdam was unveiled in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix. In 2003, the National Institute for Slavery History was created. It established a website offering educational and historical information on slavery and the slave trade.

Last but not least, slavery is fully included in the national historical canon, meaning that all school children in the Netherlands learn about this tragic episode through the school curriculums.

We are very thankful to the Caribbean Community for taking the initiative on this draft resolution. We would warmly welcome its adoption.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 35/2, of 13 October 1980, I now call on the observer for the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

Mr. Baghwat-Singh (Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization): I do not believe that anyone in this Hall —or, for that matter, anyone outside it — will have reservations about this draft resolution. We in the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization have been particularly concerned with related issues — such as human trafficking, child labour, bigotry, the slavery of poverty and the plight of downtrodden and oppressed people in many of our Member States. We would wish that future consideration of this item in the General Assembly would broaden its scope to include the issues that I have just mentioned.

We cannot celebrate this anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade without keeping in mind those who still suffer under the yoke of present-day slavery in its varied forms. We can best honour the memory of those who carried the burden of slavery in the past by working to erase it in all of its manifestations and to bestow dignity on all humankind in equal measure.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/61/L.28, as orally corrected.

In connection with the draft resolution, I would like to give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru: In connection with draft resolution A/61/L.28, I wish to inform the General Assembly that this oral statement is being made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

> "Under paragraphs 3 and 4, respectively, of draft resolution A/61/L.28 as orally corrected, the General Assembly would decide
>
> > 'to convene on 25 March 2007, a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade'
>
> and would
>
> > 'request the Secretary-General to establish a programme of outreach, with the involvement of Member States and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to appropriately commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade'.
>
> "The activities envisaged under paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, if adopted, would consist of one special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, on 25 March 2007. The activities envisaged under paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, if adopted, would consist of, first, an exhibit of African and Caribbean art in the Visitor's Lobby at United Nations Headquarters and the issuance of a commemorative poster, to increase public awareness of the commemorative meeting; secondly, a cultural event, to be organized on 23 August 2007, in connection with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition; thirdly, various speaking engagements at meetings organized by Member States, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and educational institutions, such as the annual anti-slavery awards ceremony of the NGO Anti-Slavery International, in London, and the annual meeting of the Museum of the African Diaspora, in San Francisco; fourthly, involvement in school programmes at the Iziko Museum in Cape Town; fifthly, an event at the House of the Slaves on Gorée Island, Senegal; and sixthly, informational materials, including press releases, backgrounders, a web site and promotional banners.
>
> "The estimated requirements for the year 2007 would amount to $303,900. No provisions have been made under the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 for the activities

envisaged under draft resolution A/61/L.28. The Secretariat would intend to accommodate the requirements to the fullest extent possible from within the appropriations available under section 27 (Public Information) of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, and report any additional requirements in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2006-2007."

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/61/L.28 as orally corrected.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the issuance of the draft resolution, Andorra and Ukraine have become sponsors of draft resolution A/61/L.28.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.28 as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/61/L.28 as orally corrected was adopted (resolution 61/19).

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, who wishes to explain her delegation's position following the adoption of the resolution.

Ms. Stewart (Canada): The resolution we have just adopted has as its goal the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the passing of Britain's Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, which abolished slavery in the then British empire. Canada believes that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was morally repugnant and a stain on the fabric of history. Were the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to occur today, it would constitute a crime against humanity.

At the 2001 World Conference against Racism, in Durban, Canada stated its understanding with respect to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action that under international law there is no right to a remedy for historical acts that were not illegal at the time at which they occurred. Likewise, this resolution does not affect the rule against the retroactive application of international law in matters of State responsibility. It does not create a right to compensation, nor does it impose any obligations or liability on anyone.

Our support for this resolution should not be interpreted as a change in Canada's traditional position on this specific issue. Rather, our endorsement of the resolution should be viewed as enthusiastic support for the marking of a historic event. The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was a seminal event in the development of human rights for all. It is very fitting to mark its two-hundredth anniversary. Canadians take great pride in the freedom our land subsequently offered to those who travelled to Canada via the Underground Railroad. Those who settled in Canada had an important and lasting effect on our society. Our country is stronger for their contribution.

The resolution we have just adopted is also the latest example of the long history of the special relationship between Canada and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Canada is pleased to have co-sponsored the resolution, and congratulates CARICOM and its member States on the resolution and the anniversary it celebrates.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude this stage of its consideration of agenda item 155?

It was so decided.

Reports of the Second and Fifth Committees

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now take up a report of the Second Committee on agenda item 58 and a report of the Fifth Committee on agenda item 117.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the two Committee reports that are before it today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of position. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the two Committees have been made clear in the Committees and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that, when the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee.

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Second and Fifth Committees, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Committees, unless the Assembly is notified otherwise in advance. I therefore hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the respective Committees.

Agenda item 58

Operational activities for development: operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Report of the Second Committee (A/61/427)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 13 of its report.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their positions prior to the adoption of the draft resolution.

Mr. Terrazzani (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation regrets that it was not in a position to be a co-sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the operations of the United Nations Children's Fund", which is contained in the report before us. The Principality of Monaco recognizes the importance of the work of UNICEF and will seek to strengthen our support for it. Children's issues are a priority for the Principality. I simply wanted to point that out.

Mr. Schneider (Germany): Unfortunately, we missed the deadline for placing our name on the list of sponsors of the draft resolution on the commemoration of the operations of UNICEF. Germany would therefore like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the work of UNICEF, as well as to heartily congratulate the Fund on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary. In that regard, we strongly support the draft resolution.

The Acting President: We will now take a decision on the draft resolution.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution recommended in paragraph 13 of its report, entitled "Commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the operations of the United Nations Children's Fund". May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/20).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 58.

Agenda item 117

Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/61/592)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Renovation of the residence of the Secretary-General". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 61/21).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 117.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.